

WEST GERMAN DEFENSE MINISTER STRAUSS

In the four and a half years he has been West German defense minister, Franz Josef Strauss has become a leading contender for the chancellorship. Despite his forceful drive and administrative ability,

most controversial of Bonn's leaders. The nature of the "Strauss puzzle" has been summarized by one American correspondent with the observation that Strauss "speaks aggressively for defense, autocratically for democracy, and with assertive national accents for Europe and internationalism."

Strauss' visit to the United States beginning 14 July is prompted by fear that changes in NATO defense thinking may lead to overemphasis on conventional forces at the expense of nuclear forces. He is particularly disturbed by the concept that a "threshold" must be passed before nuclear weapons are used. He believes this approach would convince the Soviets that the United States is afraid of nuclear war and encourage them to engage in limited conventional warfare. Strauss will probably again insist that all West Germany be covered by a nuclear deterrent and that Bonn's armed forces be allowed modern weapons comparable to those of the USSR.

Early Career

Strauss was born in Munich in 1915, the son of a butcher. At

an early age he demonstrated high academic talents. He was studying for a doctorate in history at the University of Munich when he was inducted into the army in 1939. Rising to the rank of lieutenant, he served for two years on the Russian front until he was disabled by frostbite. He spent the remainder of the war commanding an antiaircraft battery in Bavaria. After capture and release by the Allies in 1945, he started his career of public service--free of the taint of Nazi membership--as a county official and later as one of the co-founders of the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Bavarian wing of Adenauer's Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

Elected to the first Bundestag in 1949, Strauss had achieved some prominence by 1952 as a member of the Bundestag committee watching over the embryonic defense ministry--then called the Blank Office after its chief, the much-criticized Theodor Blank. From that time, Strauss began a relentless pursuit of Blank's job.

After being re-elected to the Bundestag in 1953 by a sizable margin, Strauss was appointed minister without portfolio in the expanded Adenauer cabinet. In September 1955 he was named a deputy chairman of the new German National Defense Council, a policy board composed of key cabinet members concerned with national defense. A month later he became minister for atomic affairs and, in that

capacity, organized the German Atomic Energy Commission. In the cabinet reshuffle of October 1956 he was named defense minister, replacing Blank.

Military Views

As defense minister, Strauss has consistently aimed at the creation of effective German military forces with the best possible equipment. He has taken it for granted that Bonn must have a nuclear weapons capability, and has attacked any "discrimination" against the German forces. Shortly after becoming defense minister, he criticized what he called the "two categories of NATO members, first class and tenth class." In one of the impetuous statements he often finds it necessary to deny having made, he reportedly remarked that the German and other European armies would be equipped with atomic weapons, "whether the Americans like it or not," and that he had no intention of providing German "foot-sloggers for the American atomic cavalry."

Strauss immediately set about creating "quality rather than quantity" by reducing the original NATO goals in an effort to weigh the impact of changing weapons strategy and to try to procure more modern weapons for the German forces. In late 1957 and early 1958, Strauss played an important role in the French-Italian-German agreement on the common development and production of armaments--a program designed to increase the influence of the three powers within the Western alliance and to cut costs through the joint development of modern weapons.

Although the three defense ministers agreed secretly in late 1957 that the cooperation would extend to nuclear weapons development, this aspect was never implemented after De Gaulle came to power. There is some evidence, however, of current participation by individual German scientists in the French nuclear program. Nevertheless, various European programs for coordinated conventional weapons development have continued.

WEST GERMANY'S ARMED FORCES

ARMY	185,000	7 armored infantry, 1 airborne, 1 mountain, and 3 armored divisions, at various stages of build-up from 35% to 90% of T/O.
AIR FORCE	61,200	2,165 aircraft, including 1,325 jets.*
NAVY	25,400	6 destroyers, 3 submarines, and 110 aircraft.
TERRITORIAL DEFENSE FORCE	14,500	Home defense, non-NATO forces. (There are 27,000 additional security forces not under Ministry of Defense.)
TOTAL STRENGTH	286,100	

* Only major equipment listed.

Strauss has presided over the build-up of a fighting machine which is constantly gaining in combat effectiveness and now numbers almost 300,000 men. He has consistently maintained his interest in obtaining the most modern weapons; he recently complained that the supply of dual-purpose weapons--those for use with either conventional or nuclear warhead--has been proceeding too slowly and that such weapons now make up only 8 percent of Bonn's equipment.

Strauss has stressed the need for much greater weapons

modernization and standardization in the NATO forces and has shifted procurement plans when he felt that better weapons were available to Allied forces than those available to the Germans. He recently complained that much of the American equipment--particularly tanks and artillery--was out of date, and said the Germans were sometimes reluctant to purchase such equipment when they could produce better weapons themselves.

In recent months Strauss has repeatedly voiced his concern over the discussions of shifts in NATO defense concepts toward a greater emphasis on conventional forces. The Germans are also worried that the new stress on conventional weapons might deprive Bonn of the dual-purpose weapons that Strauss wants for the German forces.

In recent extremely frank discussions with Henry Kissinger and Ambassador Dowling, Strauss showed how deeply and even emotionally concerned he is over the implications of the new strategic thinking. Strauss felt that the American position paper presented to NATO on 26 April was theoretical and vague, noting that certain phrases in it could lead to the belief that Bonn's forces would not be permitted the Honest John or Pershing battalions, or that the Germans were to fill the conventional aspects of the NATO build-up and the US the nuclear.

Strauss also showed his concern over the question of command and control, agreeing to the concept of American

control over the nuclear warheads but stating that he was eager to keep the Honest John battalions under the direct control of divisional commanders. Although carried away with the term "NATO as a fourth atomic power," Strauss has not yet made his views clear on how the command function would be determined for the use of nuclear weapons for Europe's defense.

In the talks with Kissinger, Strauss showed extreme annoyance at what he termed an American conviction that he was "obsessed" by the need for nuclear war, charging that the German Socialists were to blame for such a misunderstanding. He stressed that he had always believed in the necessity of building up both conventional and nuclear forces. He declared there was no need for an American "lecture" on the build-up of conventional forces, and claimed that the German Army is better equipped than the American to fight a conventional war in Europe.

Personality, Political Views

As a political figure, Strauss presents a classic portrait of a dynamic and many-sided personality. A brilliant organizer and "operator," he has a quick and retentive mind which enables him to comprehend the details of military technology and master the most intricate governmental problems. Few observers fail to be impressed by Strauss' personal magnetism and his drive and enthusiasm. He can be charming, professorial, exasperating, or fierce, but never stodgy, dull, or evasive. An

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extremely effective speaker, in public or in private, Strauss is very direct, although he often tends to oversimplify his arguments and "think in slogans."

Strauss' intense single-mindedness and the vehemence with which he assails his opponents have won him many political battles but have also made many bitter enemies. His critics include not only the opposition Social Democrats (SPD) but also a good number of his CDU colleagues and fellow government officials. A CDU Bundestag deputy commented recently that although he had once admired Strauss as a "vigorous fighter," he now believes the defense minister is "basically unprincipled and seeks only personal power."

The SPD accuses him of "warmongering" and "irresponsible belligerence," citing statements such as those attributed to Strauss in November 1956 that the West was "in a position to erase the Soviet empire from the map" at any time. His vehement attacks on Communism and the USSR prompted British Socialist Richard Crossman to call Strauss "the most dangerous man" in Western Europe. Many Germans apparently are afraid of his "will to power" because they feel that, unlike Adenauer, he will abuse it.

The bitterest criticism has come from the widely read and influential weekly magazine Spiegel, which, in an article last April, attacked Strauss as a "complete opportunist," totally unprincipled and lacking any respect for law or democratic institutions. Quoting

Strauss as saying the "time will come when barracks are as necessary as churches," the article warned that if the German people allow Strauss to become chancellor they are inviting the "final struggle" inevitably leading to war.

Strauss brushes aside such charges with ready reassurance of his loyalty to the West, to NATO, and to democracy. Although he has placed new emphasis on Germany's national interests and demanded full equality, he clearly argues these interests in terms of total commitment to the West. He maintains that Germany today is an aspect of Europe, and that the old formula of "Germany as an independent world power" has failed completely. Germany today can have no separate national goal. The goal must be to make a contribution to European unification and the Atlantic Alliance."

Strauss has also ruled out a "third force" status for Europe, stating that it "ended before it began, because of political developments and the technological revolution. The necessary counterweight can be achieved only by an Atlantic community with two strong components--North America and Europe."

Although Strauss has on occasion--and as recently as early 1960--expressed interest in accepting limitations on Germany's military and political status in Europe as a price for obtaining German reunification, he has at other times referred to a neutral German solution as the "nihilistic road," not unlike "setting a

good ship on the high seas with a broken engine. You could not steer it. Such a Germany would have no political morale, no aims, and could easily become the victim of political seduction by the extremists."

Strauss has declared flatly that war with the USSR would not reunify Germany in freedom and has asserted that, even in the event of an uprising in East Germany, West Germany would not intervene because of the risk of atomic war. He also has declared that Germany "wants to live in peace and not play the role of a military great power."

As for the status of Berlin, Strauss told Kissinger that, while the threshold might be raised in West Germany to permit defense by conventional weapons, it should be lowered in planning for a defense of Berlin. In these talks, he indicated that he did not have a high opinion of Allied planning on Berlin countermoves and that he knew few details about the planning; he had little of value to suggest himself.

Political Future

Strauss, although near the top of the list of possible successors to Adenauer, is generally regarded as "chancellor after next." His rapid rise

has made even Adenauer critical and suspicious.

A group of CDU party and government leaders--including Foreign Minister Brentano, Interior Minister Schroeder, and two other cabinet ministers--has reportedly joined forces in an effort to stop Strauss from eventually extending his power to the chancellorship. They have personal motives as well as fears that he might damage Germany's position abroad. Some of them are reportedly alarmed that any further expansion of Strauss' influence will inevitably threaten the unity and policies of the CDU and that Strauss, as foreign or defense minister in a post-Adenauer government headed by Economics Minister Erhard, would completely dominate such a government and use his position as a steppingstone to the chancellorship.

Any effort by those who wish to block Strauss, however, faces formidable obstacles. Despite their possible uneasiness, many in the CDU are surely reluctant to oppose a possible winner. Strauss' position was strengthened last March when he was elected chairman of the CSU, which represents one fifth of the combined CDU/CSU vote. His position is likely to be strengthened further this summer by his active role as one of the aggressive "big guns" of the Christian Democratic election campaign. (SECRET NOFORN)